

Program at Elkton was shut down in 2009, but health concerns remain

Washington, D.C. - Out of concern for the health of both the prison guards and the prisoners at Elkton Prison and concern that health compromising electronic recycling programs are ongoing at prisons around the country, Rep. Charlie Wilson (OH-6) has requested a hearing on the matter of the House Judiciary Committee. The formal request, which was sent today, follows.

October 29, 2010

Chairman Bobby Scott
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security
House Committee on the Judiciary
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Scott,

For the last several years, I have been working hard to bring attention to the ongoing negative health effects of prison electronic recycling programs on guards and prisoners. In light of the report recently released by the United States Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General (OIG), I respectfully request a hearing on this issue of great importance to me and the people of Ohio's 6th District. The full OIG report can be found at <http://www.justice.gov/oig/reports/BOP/o1010.pdf>.

In short, electronic recycling—disassembly and glass breaking—occurred at several Federal

Prison Industries, Inc. (also known as UNICOR) operated factories from 1997 until early 2003. During this time, inmates and staff were working in an environment without respiratory protection or any type of engineering control in place to minimize exposures during the glass breaking operations. From the chart on page 48 of the report, it is very clear that there was a complete disregard for the health and safety of staff and prisoners. The report also shows that red flags were raised time and time again, without any action.

My utmost concern is the Elkton Prison in Elkrun Township, Ohio. While I understand their electronic recycling facility has been closed, there are several other prisons mentioned in the report that have recycling programs still operating. In light of the important health and safety considerations surrounding this situation, I believe a hearing is warranted to look into what actions have been taken and still need to be taken by UNICOR and the Bureau of Prisons to better protect our prison employees and inmates.

Given the importance of this matter, and your Subcommittee's positive track record on prison issues, I appreciate your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Charlie Wilson

MEMBER OF CONGRESS